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LEGENDS OF THE ISLES

AND

Highland Gatherings.

BY

CHARLES MACKAY,

AUTHOR OF

"EGERIA," "THE LUMP OF GOLD," "UNDER GREEN LEAVES,"

ETC. ETC.

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THIS series of Poems, having exclusive reference to the scenery of the Hebrides and of the Highland counties of Ross, Inverness, and Moray, and to the Legends and Historical Incidents which lend an additional charm to those beautiful regions, was first published in the year 1845, by the Messrs. Blackwood, of Edinburgh, in a seven-and-sixpenny volume, which has long been out of print. The present edition includes only the first half of the original volume, and two Poems since added. The concluding half has been reprinted under the title of "Ballads and Lyrical Poems," in the cheap series of the Author's Poems now in course of publication by Messrs. Routledge & Co.

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Legends of the Isles, &c.

PROLOGUE.

THE HIGHLAND RAMBLE.

"WE three are young : we have a month to spare ;
Money enough ; and, whistling off our care,
We can forsake the turmoil of the town,
And tread the wilds—making our faces brown
With sunshine, on the peaks of some high Ben.
Let us away,—three glad, unburden'd men—
And trace some mountain-torrent to its source,
'Mid fern and heather, juniper and gorse,
Braving all weathers. I, with gun, one day
Will cater for you, and go forth to slay
The grouse in corries, where they love to dwell ;
Or sit with you upon some granite fell,
And talk for hours of high philosophy,
Or sun ourselves in warmth of poesy :
And should these tire, with rod in hand, we'll go
To streams that leap—too frolicsome to flow—
Angling for trout, and catch them by themselves,
In fancied citadel, beneath the shelves

Of slippery stone, o'er which the waters rush.
Let us away. My cheeks and forehead flush
At the mere thought ; so glad would be my soul
To be alone with Nature for one whole
Untrammell'd month—having no thought of dross,
Or dull entanglements of gain and loss ;
Of Blackstone drear, or Barnewall's Reports,
Or aught that smells of lawyers and the courts.
Let us away, this pleasant summer time,
Thou, Karl, canst muse, and shape the tuneful
rhyme

Amidst thy well-belovèd hills and straths :
Thou, Patrick, canst ascend the mountain-paths,
Thy well-fill'd flask in pocket, and rehearse
Plain prose with me, as genial as his verse ;
And wet or whet each argumental flaw
With running waters dash'd with usquebaugh."

Thus Alistor, a Templar keen and young,
Of a clear head, and of a fluent tongue,—
Subtle logician, but with earnest mind,
And heart brimful of hope for human kind,
Spake to his friends ; and him, with voice of cheer,
Answer'd the rhymers : " Half one toilsome year
I've moil'd in cities, and, like thee, I long
To see the placid lochs, the torrents strong,
The purple moors, the white rocks crimson-crown'd,
And amber waters, in their depths embrown'd.
One month of freedom from the drowsy thrall
Of custom, would be health, joy, wisdom, all,
To us who know each other, and delight
To be let loose into the infinite

Of our own fancies—free from task and rule,
And all the stiff conventions of the school
Of the great world. Our tyrant, lean-faced Care,
Shall not pursue us to the mountain air,
If we play truant. Let us hence away,
And have one month of pleasure while we may."

Patrick, the rough in speech, the true in heart,
A sculptor, born to elevate his art,
And loving it with fervour such as burn'd
In old Pygmalion's spirit, when he yearn'd
For the sweet image that his hands had made,
Shouted consent. "But whither bound?" he
said;

"What far-off mountain summit shall we scale?
What salt-sea loch, winding through many a vale,
Shall we explore, or shall we rather glide
Through lakes inland, unruffled by a tide?—
Not that it matters. Thou, friend poet, know'st
Better than we all grandeurs of the coast:
The lochs, the straths, the hoary-headed Bens,
The windy corries, and the wild green glens,
And all the thunderous waterfalls that leap
Betwixt the Atlantic and the German deep;
And we will follow, if our guide thou't be,
By Lomond, Linnhe, Lochy, or Maree;
Through Ross-shire moors, to Hebridean isle,
Or 'mid the lordly mountains of Argyll,
Where'er thou wilt." The poet made reply,
With a keen pleasure sparkling in his eye:
"There is a valley, beautifully lone,
Rude of access, to few but hunters known:

A glen so full of gray magnificence,
Of rock and mountain, that with love intense,
Salvator's self, if thither he had stray'd,
Might, rapture-struck, a dwelling-place have made
Of some wild nook. There, fill'd with ecstasies,
He might have sat, his spirit in his eyes,
And all his mind impregnate, till he wrought
On the dumb canvas an immortal thought.
But not all rude and gloomy is the vale :
Ye wild-thyme odours, floating on the gale ;
Ye tufts of heather, blooming on the slopes ;
Ye birch-trees, waving from the rocky copes
Of many a hill, your brows festoon'd in braids,
Or drooping, like the locks of love-lorn maids ;
Ye dark-green pines ; ye larches, fan-like spread ;
And ye, witch-scaring rowans, gleaming red ;
Ye flowers innumerable, earth-jewels fair,
That lift your eyelids to the morning air ;
And all ye torrents, that with eloquent voice
Call on the mountain echoes to rejoice,
And sing, amid the wilderness, a song
Of jubilant gladness, when the floods are strong ;
Attest the wild luxuriance of the scene
That lengthening spreads (with many a strath between,
And purple moorland, haunt of birds and bees)
Around the fern-clad feet and shaggy knees
Of mighty Nevis ! monarch of the hills,
The paramount of mountains, gemm'd with rills,
Scantily robed, his Titan-shoulders nude,
Lifting his head in royal solitude
Above his peers, and grimly looking down
Over all Britain from his misty crown !"

Thus spake the rhymers ; and between them three
Was made a binding compact, suddenly,
That they should waken with the morning sun,
And journey northwards. As was said, was done.
Borne on the wings of steam ten leagues an hour,
They call'd it slow, but bless'd its mighty power ;
And thought awhile, in pensive wonder dumb,
Of greater triumphs in the days to come ;
When Distance,—dim tradition of the Past,
Worn-out idea, too absurd to last,—
Should bar no more the enterprise of man,
Nor Time compress his efforts to a span ;
When docile lightnings, tether'd to a wire,
Should turn to messengers at his desire,
And bearing thoughts from Europe to Cathay,
Start at the dawning, and return ere day :
And of the social evils that should cease
In the new age of intercourse and peace ;
When War, old tyrant, bloody-faced and pale,
Should yield his breath, run over on the rail ;—
Crush'd by the car of Steam, no more to rise,
To fill the world with tears and agonies.

Short was their stay, nor turn'd they ev'n aside
To view the mighty city of the Clyde,
The great metropolis of plodding folk,
Tall chimneys, cotton, enterprise, and smoke ;
But bound for Crinan while the morn was new,
Bade to the lovely Firth a fond adieu.

Clear was the sky ; the sea reflected back
The morning lustre, as they held their track

By Rothesay, through the Kyles ; and evermore
Some varied beauty woo'd them from the shore
To gaze upon it. Green hills speck'd with sheep,
Or jutting rocks that nodded o'er the deep ;
And here and there, some mighty boulder-stone
Roll'd from a precipice to stand alone—
Memento of convulsions that had wrung
The hills to agony when earth was young.

High to the south, majestic Arran rear'd
Its jagged peaks, storm-batter'd, riv'n, and sear'd ;
And blue Lochfine, enswathed by mountains dun,
Display'd her teeming bosom to the sun,
And raised her ripples to reflect the light,
While graceful sea-gulls, plumed in snowy white,
Follow'd the creaming furrow of the prow
With easy pinion pleurably slow ;
Then on the waters floated like a fleet
Of tiny vessels, argosies complete,
Such as brave Gulliver, deep wading, drew
Victorious from the forts of Blefuscu.

And sweet to these rejoicing mariners
Were Crinan's banks, o'ergrown with sunny furze,
With berried brambles, spotted fox-glove bells,
Like Mab's pagodas, built on pigmy fells,
With hawthorn bushes, purple-crested heath,
And orchis and anemone beneath,
In plenteous beauty. Disembarking here,
Fresh for the exercise, and full of cheer,
They walk'd rejoicing onward, staff in hand,
Across the isthmus, nine good miles of land,

And left the lingering track-boat in the locks,
While they went scrambling over briery rocks
For heather sprigs, to grace their caps of blue ;
Then on again, rejoicing in the view
Of fertile valleys dotted black with kine,
And hills knee-deep in tamarisk and pine ;
Discoursing as they went of mica-schist,
The old red sandstone, and the great "Fire mist."
Of nebulae—exploded ; and the birth,
Myriads of ages past, of a young earth,—
Still young and fresh, though venerably old ;
And of the wondrous tale in "Cosmos" told,
Of heavenly architecture infinite,
Suns, systems, groups, revolving in the light
Of beauty eternal, and eternal law,—
Of infinite love, magnificence and awe.

And thus the hours were rapidly consumed
In furnace of their thought, and toil entomb'd
In mental working ; so that when the sea
Burst on their startled vision suddenly,
They doubted if their eyes beheld indeed
Loch Crinan, and those seas that, like a mead
Sprinkled with flow'rs, were studded o'er with isles ;
But soon they knew them gleaming in the smiles
Of an unclouded sun ; and once again
Stepping on ship-board, steam'd along the main.

Most lovely, oh, most beautiful and grand
Were all the scenes of this romantic land !
Isle after isle, with gray empurpled rocks,
Breasted in steadfast majesty the shocks,

Stupendous, of the wild Atlantic wave ;
Many a desolate sonorous cave
Re-echoed through its inmost vaults profound
The mighty diapason and full sound
Of Corryvreckan—awful orator—
Preaching to lonely isles with eloquent roar ;
Many a mountain rear'd its lordly crest,
Bronzed or empurpled by the radiant west ;
Many a hill-girt rock indented far
The mainland ; many a high and frowning scaur,
The haunt of sea-fowl, raised its barren form,
Furrow'd with age, defiant of the storm ;
And over all this hazy realm was spread
A halo of sad memories of the dead :
Of mournful love-tales ; of old tragedies,
Filling the heart with pity, and the eyes
With tears, at bare remembrance ; and old songs
Of love's endurance, love's despair, love's wrongs,
And triumph o'er all obstacles at last ;
And all the grief and passion of the past.
Invoking these to daylight from the womb
Of dim tradition, into fuller bloom
Of their fresh fancy, greater ravishment
Was it to them to ponder as they went
Upon each legend in its own sad place,
To which it lent a beauty and a grace.

And when they reach'd the rock-bound shore of
Mull,
A land of driving sleets and vapours dull,
But fill'd with mournful grandeur and austere
Magnificence, the Western wave shone clear

In the last beams of day. The dying light,
Ere it departed, swathed each mountain-height
In robes of purple ; and adown the west,
Where sea and sky seem'd mingling—breast to breast—
Drew the dense banks of ponderous clouds, and spread
A mantle o'er them of a royal red,
Belted with purple—lined with amber—tinged
With fiery gold—and blushing-purple fringed.

And gorgeous was it o'er the Western Isles
To gaze upon the sunset 'mid those piles
Of mountainous clouds. They rear'd their sunny copes
Like heavenly Alps, with cities on their slopes,
Built amid glaciers—bristling fierce with towers,
Turrets and battlements of warlike powers—
Jaggèd with priestly pinnacles and spires—
And crown'd with domes, that glitter'd in the fires
Of the slant sun, like smithied silver bright ;—
The capitals of Cloudland. When the light
Grew paler, and the Eastern dark came down,
And o'er the mystery drew his mantle brown,
'Twas lovely still to watch the shore and sea
Robed in the garment of obscurity ;
To see the headlands looming through the mist,
As if dissever'd from the earth, they wist
Not altogether of which element
They were a part, indissolubly blent.

The lights of Oban glimmer'd faint and far,
And over Cruachan shone out one star
Attendant on the moon ; who, issuing forth
Yellow and full, display'd to all the north

Her matron face, and o'er each eastern hill
Pour'd sleepy lustre. Beautifully still
Lay Lochlin in her beams—Lochlin whose breast
Wafted so oft the chieftains of the west
To bloody warfare; Lochlin that of yore
The galleys of the Gael to battle bore
Against the men of haughty Innisfail;
Lochlin of storms, where Fingal spread his sail
To meet Cuchullin; Lochlin of the spears;
Blue Lochlin of the songs of other years.
A mournful sea it was, a mournful shore;
But yet so lovely, vested in the hoar
Antiquity of many memories,
That they regretted when their watchful eyes
Descried Fortwilliam and their journey's end,
And great Ben Nevis, corried, strath'd, and glenn'd,
Rising before them. Soon the sorrow pass'd,—
For they had reached a resting-place at last,
Where for a season they might feed Delight
On Beauty, and in worldly Care's despite
Give themselves up to Nature—not in part,
But with all energy of mind and heart,—
That, ere returning to the world again,
That little month might make them better men.
And what they talk'd of, what they dream'd or sung,
What tales they told, or beads of fancy strung,
What aspirations of a better time,
They form'd for men, behold in rhythm and rhyme.



THE SEA-KING'S BURIAL.

["The old Norse kings, when about to die, had their body laid into a ship; the ship sent forth with sails set, and slow fire burning in it, that, once out at sea, it might blaze up in flame, and in such manner bury worthily the old hero, at once in the sky and in the ocean."—CARLYLE'S *Hero Worship*.]

I.

"MY strength is failing fast,"
Said the Sea-king to his men ;—
"I shall never sail the seas
Like a conqueror, again.
But while yet a drop remains
Of the life-blood in my veins,
Raise, oh, raise me from the bed ;—
Put the crown upon my head ;—
Put my good sword in my hand ;
And so lead me to the strand,
Where my ship at anchor rides
Steadily ;
If I cannot end my life
In the bloody battle-strife,
Let me die as I have lived,
On the sea."

II.

They have raised King Balder up,
Put his crown upon his head ;

They have sheath'd his limbs in mail,
 And the purple o'er him spread ;
 And amid the greeting rude
 Of a gathering multitude,
 Borne him slowly to the shore—
 All the energy of yore
 From his dim eyes flashing forth—
 Old sea-lion of the North ;—
 As he look'd upon his ship
Riding free.
 And on his forehead pale
 Felt the cold refreshing gale,
 And heard the welcome sound
Of the sea.

III.

" Hurra ! for mighty Balder !
 As he lived, so he will die !
 Hurra ! hurra ! for Balder !"
 Said the crowd as he went by.
 " He will perish on the wave,
 Like the old Viking brave ;
 And in high Valhalla's halls
 Hold eternal festivals ;
 And drink the blood-red draught
 None but heroes ever quaff'd,
 With Odin and the spirits
Of the free.
 In the fire, or in the wreck,
 He will die upon the deck,
 And be buried like a monarch
Of the sea."

IV.

Old Balder heard their shouts
As they bore him to the beach ;
And his fading eye grew bright
With the eloquence of speech,
As he heard the mighty roar
Of the people on the shore,
And the trumpets pealing round
With a bold triumphal sound,
And saw the flags afar
Of a hundred ships of war,
That were riding in the harbour
Gallantly.

And said Balder to his men—
And his pale cheek flush'd again—
“I have lived, and I will die
On the sea.”

V.

They have borne him to the ship
With a slow and solemn tread ;
They have placed him on the deck
With his crown upon his head,
Where he sat as on a throne ;
And have left him there alone,
With his anchor ready weigh'd,
And the snowy sails display'd
To the favouring wind, once more
Blowing freshly from the shore ;
And have bidden him farewell
Tenderly ;

Saying, "King of mighty men,
We shall meet thee yet again,
In Valhalla, with the monarchs

Of the sea."

VI.

Underneath him in the hold
They had placed the lighted brand ;
And the fire was burning slow
As the vessel from the land,
Like a stag-hound from the slips,
Darted forth from out the ships ;—
There was music in her sail
As it swell'd before the gale,
And a dashing at her prow
As it cleft the waves below,
And the good ship sped along,

Scudding free.

As on many a battle morn
In her time she had been borne,
To struggle, and to conquer

On the sea.

VII.

And the King with sudden strength
Started up, and paced the deck,
With his good sword for his staff,
And his robe around his neck ;—
Once alone, he waved his hand
To the people on the land ;—
And with shout and joyous cry
Once again they made reply,

Till the loud exulting cheer
Sounded faintly on his ear ;
For the gale was o'er him blowing,
Fresh and free ;
And ere yet an hour had pass'd,
He was driven before the blast,
And a storm was on his path,
On the sea.

VIII.

And still upon the deck—
While the storm about him rent,
King Balder paced about
Till his failing strength was spent.
Then he stopp'd awhile to rest—
Cross'd his hands upon his breast,
And look'd upward to the sky,
With a dim but dauntless eye ;
And heard the tall mast creak,
And the fitful tempest speak
Shrill and fierce, to the billows
Rushing free ;
And within himself he said,
"I am coming, oh, ye dead !
To join you in Valhalla,
O'er the sea.

IX.

"So blow, ye tempests—blow,
And my spirit shall not quail ;
I have fought with many a foe ;—
I have weather'd many a gale ;

And in this hour of death,
Ere I yield my fleeting breath—
Ere the fire now burning slow
Shall come rushing from below,
And this worn and wasted frame
Be devoted to the flame—
I will raise my voice in triumph,
Singing free ;—
To the great All-father's home
I am driving through the foam,
I am sailing to Valhalla,
O'er the sea.

X.

" So, blow, ye stormy winds—
And ye flames ascend on high ;—
In the easy, idle bed
Let the slave and coward die !
But give me the driving keel,
Clang of shields and flashing steel ;—
Or my foot on foreign ground
With my enemies around !
Happy, happy, thus I'd yield,
On the deck or in the field,
My last breath, shouting on
' To Victory.'
" But since this has been denied,
They shall say that I have died
Without finching, like a monarch
Of the sea."

XI.

And Balder spake no more,
And no sound escaped his lip ;—
And he look'd, yet scarcely saw
The destruction of his ship ;
Nor the fleet sparks mounting high,
Nor the glare upon the sky ;—
Scarcely heard the billows dash,
Nor the burning timber crash ;—
Scarcely felt the scorching heat
That was gathering at his feet,
Nor the fierce flames mounting o'er him
Greedily.

But the life was in him yet,
And the courage to forget
All his pain, in his triumph
On the sea.

XII.

Once alone a cry arose,
Half of anguish, half of pride,
As he sprang upon his feet,
With the flames on every side.
"I am coming !" said the King,
"Where the swords and bucklers ring—
Where the warrior lives again
With the souls of mighty men—
Where the weary find repose,
And the red wine ever flows ;—
I am coming, great All-Father,
Unto thee !

Unto Odin, unto Thor,
And the strong true hearts of yore—
I am coming to Valhalla,
O'er the sea."

XIII.

Red and fierce upon the sky
Until midnight, shone the glare,
And the burning ship drove on—
Like a meteor of the air.
She was driven and hurried past,
'Mid the roaring of the blast.
And of Balder, warrior-born,
Naught remain'd at break of morn,
On the charr'd and blacken'd hull,
But some ashes and a skull ;
And still the vessel drifted
Heavily,
With a pale and hazy light
Until far into the night,
When the storm had spent its rage
On the sea.

XIV.

Then the ocean ceased her strife
With the wild winds lull'd to rest,
And a full, round, placid moon
Shed a halo on her breast ;
And the burning ship still lay
On the deep sea, far away ;

From her ribs of solid oak,
Pouring forth the flame and smoke ;
Until, burnt through all her bulk
To the water's edge, the hulk
Down a thousand fathoms sunk
Suddenly,
With a low and sullen sound ;
While the billows sang around
Sad requiems for the monarch
Of the sea.



THE DANCE OF BALLOCHROY.

I.

"If e'er you woo'd a loving maid,
And having won her, you betray'd,
Beware, Lord Edward, thoughtless boy,
Nor pass the hills of Ballochroy.

II.

"For there, 'tis said, the livelong nights
The sward is trod by elves and sprites,
And shadowy forms of maids departed,
And ghosts of women broken-hearted.

III.

"And aye they dance a mystic round
Upon these knolls of haunted ground,
And sing sweet airs till break of day,
To lure the traveller from his way.

IV.

"Though if your soul from guilt be clear,
Ride boldly on ;—you need not fear ;
For pleasant sounds, and sights of joy,
Shall hem you round on Ballochroy.

V.

"But if you've brought a maid to death
By guileful words and breach of faith,
Shut ear and eye, nor look behind,
Nor hear their voices on the wind.

VI.

"They'll seek your senses to entrance—
They'll woo you to their airy dance ;
And press, with winning smiles and quips,
Their melting kisses to your lips:

VII.

"And every kiss shall be a dart
That through your lips shall pierce your heart ;
For short the life and short the joy
Of those who dance on Ballochroy."

VIII.

Lord Edward laugh'd his words to scorn—
"I must be wed to-morrow morn ;
Your idle tale I may not hear ;
I cannot linger from my dear."

IX.

He gave the reins to his dapple gray,
And o'er the mountain rode away ;
And the old man sigh'd, "I wish him joy
On the haunted hills of Ballochroy !"

X.

And three miles west, and three miles north,
Over the moorland went he forth,
And thought of his bonny blushing May,
The fairest maid of Oronsay.

XI.

And he thought of a lady dead and gone—
Of Ellen, under the kirk-yard stone ;
And then he whistled a hunting-song
To drown remembrance of a wrong.

XII.

But still it came. "Alas !" thought he,
"I fear she died for love of me :
Soft be her sleep in the fresh green sod—
I trust her spirit is with her God.

XIII.

"But to-morrow is my bridal day
With the bonnie Bell of Oronsay ;
From her no fate my soul shall sever,
So let the past be past for ever."

XIV.

And still he whistled his hunting-tune,
Till high in the heavens arose the moon,
And had no thought but of future joy,
Till he came to the hills of Ballochroy.

XV.

And there, beneath a birken-tree,
He found a lady fair to see,
With eyes that might the stars eclipse,
And a smile upon her ripe red lips.

XVI.

Her garments seem'd of azure bright,
Her dainty hands were rosy white,
And her golden hair so long and sleek,
Fell clustering o'er each glowing cheek.

XVII.

He gazed upon this bonnie May,
Fairer than Bell of Oronsay,
Fairer than Ellen, dead and gone,
Or any maid the sun shone on.

XVIII.

"Oh, lady dear! the night is chill,
The dews are damp upon the hill,
A fitful wind begins to moan—
What brings thee here so late alone?"

XIX.

The lady blush'd, and on her tongue—
Timid—the faltering answer hung—
“I have come for thee, dear lord,” she said,
And on his arm her hand she laid.

XX.

“For I have loved thee long and well,
More than a maiden ought to tell,
And I sit beneath this birken-tree
To pass one hour of love with thee.”

XXI.

He sprang from his steed of dapple gray,
And at the lady's feet he lay;
Her lily hand in his he press'd,
And lean'd his head upon her breast.

XXII.

Her long fair tresses o'er him hung,
As round his neck her arm she flung;
Her beauty charm'd both touch and sight—
His pulse beat quicker with delight:—

XXIII.

“Oh, lady dear! these eyes of mine
Never saw beauty like to thine!
Those loving lips, oh, let me kiss!
Never was rapture like to this!”

XXIV.

She smiled upon him as he spoke,
And on his ear these accents broke ;
“Deep was the love for thee I bore—
Thou shalt be mine for evermore.

XXV.

“Come to my bower—’tis fair to see,
And all prepared, dear lord, for thee ;
Come !” and such smiles her face suffused,
He had been stone had he refused.

XXVI.

His heart was full, his reeling brain
Felt the sharp pleasure prick like pain ;
And his eyes grew dim with love and joy
On the haunted hills of Ballochroy.

XXVII.

On every side—above—below—
He heard a strain of music flow,
Dying in murmurs on his ear,
Gentle and plaintive, soft and clear.

XXVIII.

Anon a bolder voice it took,
Till all the air with music shook—
A full, inspiring, martial strain,
Heaving like waves upon the main.

XXIX.

Amid the tangling flowers and grass
The fitful echoes seem'd to pass ;
And then it sank, and sweet and slow,
Mingled the notes of joy and woe ;—

XXX.

Then changed again : a jocund lay
Rose 'mid the tree-tops far away ;
And brisk and light, and tuned to pleasure,
Floated in air the merry measure.

XXXI.

And nearer as the rapture came,
He felt its power in all his frame ;
His pulse beat quick, his eyes grew bright,
His limbs grew supple with delight.

XXXII.

With throbbing heart and loving look,
The lady by the hand he took ;
And as she smiled, her fairy feet
Moved to the measure brisk and sweet.

XXXIII.

He would not, if he could, resist,
Her beauty wrapp'd him like a mist ;
And gliding with her, kind yet coy,
They danced the dance of Ballochroy.

XXXIV.

He clasp'd her round the dainty waist,
Their glowing hands were interlaced ;
And now they glided—now they flew—
And tripp'd in circles o'er the dew.

XXXV.

And still the music sounded high
The full free tide of harmony ;
Responsive still to every note
Their nimble footsteps seem'd to float.

XXXVI.

And now they bounded, now they tripp'd,
With panting pleasure, open-lipp'd,
And brisker, merrier, louder still
Sounded the music o'er the hill.

XXXVII.

Faint with the joy, he craved delay ;
But no—his limbs refused to stay,
And danced impulsive to the sound,
And traced a circle on the ground.

XXXVIII.

There seem'd a film before his eyes—
He saw new shapes of beauty rise ;—
They seem'd to gather at the tune
Between him and the western moon.

XXXIX.

In robes of azure and of green,
Amber and white, and purple sheen—
A troop of maidens young and fair,
With sparkling eyes and flowing hair.

XL.

And as before his sight they pass'd,
Each maid seem'd lovelier than the last,
And smiled upon him as she came,
With looks of love, and eyes of flame.

XLI.

Then smoothing back their tresses bright,
They join'd their fingers long and white,
And lightly shook their sparkling feet
To the glad measure as it beat.

XLII.

And as the fairy round they danced,
And now retreated, now advanced,
Their noiseless footsteps on the sod
Left a green circle where they trod.

XLIII.

Like dragon-flies upon a stream,
Or motes upon a slanting beam,
They parted—met—retired—entwined
Their loose robes waving in the wind.

XLIV.

Transparent as the network light
Spun by the gossamer at night,
Through every fold each rounded limb
Shone warm and beautiful, but dim.

XLV.

Dazzled and reeling with delight,
He turn'd away his aching sight,
Then fell exhausted in a swoon,
In the full radiance of the moon.

XLVI.

Not long endured his soul's eclipse ;
He felt warm kisses on his lips,
And heard a voice in accents clear
Breathe a soft whisper in his ear,—

XLVII.

"Rise, my dear lord ! shake off this trance,
And join my sisters in their dance ;
'Tis all to give thee joy they play ;
My hand shall guide thee—come away !"

XLVIII.

He rose ;—her bright eyes brighter shone,
Raining kind looks to cheer him on ;
While the celestial music still
Roll'd its glad echoes o'er the hill.

XLIX.

And once again the dance they twined—
They seem'd like feathers on the wind—
Their hands they waved, their feet they twirl'd—
They ran, they leap'd, they tripp'd, they whirl'd.

L.

But as he danced his eyes grew dim,
His blood ran thick through every limb;
And every face, so fair and bright,
Appear'd distorted to his sight.

LI.

The lustre of their eyes was gone,
Their cheeks grew wrinkled, pale, and wan;
Their fair plump arms grew shrivell'd skin,
Their voices hoarse, and sharp, and thin.

LII.

Bloodshot and blear, and hollow-eyed,
Each raised her finger to deride;
And each, more hideous than the last,
Chatter'd and jabber'd as she pass'd.

LIII.

And with discordant yell and shout,
They wheel'd in frantic droves about,
And gibing, in his visage, scowl'd,
And moan'd, and shriek'd, and laugh'd, and howl'd.

LIV.

Again he fell in speechless dread ;
And then came one with drooping head,
And looks all pity and dismay,
And gazed upon him where he lay.

LV.

Her glancing eyes were black as jet,
Her fair pale cheeks with tears were wet ;
And beauty, modesty, and grace
Strove for the mastery on her face.

LVI.

He knew her well ; and, as she wept,
A cold, cold shudder o'er him crept :
'Twas Ellen's self ! ah, well he knew
That face so fair—that heart so true !

LVII.

He felt her tear-drops fall and flow,
But they were chill as melted snow ;
Then looking on her face, he sigh'd,
Felt her cold kiss, and shivering—died !

LVIII.

Next day, with many an anxious fear,
His father sought him far and near ;
And his sad mother, old and gray,
Wept with the bride of Oronsay.

LIX.

They found his body on the knoll,
And pray'd for mercy on his soul ;
And his bride a widow's weeds put on,
And mourn'd Lord Edward, dead and gone.

LX.

If you have brought a maid to death
By guileful words and breach of faith—
In weal or woe, in grief or joy,
Beware the hills of Ballochroy !



ST. COLUMBA ; OR THE COUNTING OF THE ISLES.

[The following legend, with some slight variation, is current in the Hebrides. One version states, that the Saint takes his stand upon the walls of the ruined cathedral of Iona, and counts the isles ; but makes no mention of the ghostly company introduced into the ballad.]

I.

HUSH'D were the winds, and not a breath
Disturb'd the peaceful sea,
And even to Staffa's echoing caves
The large, uneasy, western waves
Came beating quietly ;
Starless and moonless was the night,
And on the waters lay,
Like silence palpable to sight,
Thick wreaths of vapour gray.

II.

Far in the west, 'mid rain and mist,
Upon the deep afloat,
Without an oar, without a sail,
Came down a little boat :
Amid the mazes of the isles
By hands unseen propell'd,
By frowning scaur, through whirlpool roar,
Its noiseless way it held ;
Like a shadow gliding, dark and slow,
Unwitting how the winds might blow.

III.

And at the stern, with downcast eyes,
And hands upon his breast,
There sat the figure of a man,
Serene, like one possess'd
With peaceful thoughts, that quite absorb'd
All faculties combined,
So that his sight, to left nor right,
Ne'er wander'd from his mind,
Nor his ear heard the murmur low
Of waters cleaving at the prow.

IV.

Down through the seas, where Lewis afar
The dim horizon streaks ;
By Skye, where lordly Cuillens rear
Their high fantastic peaks ;
By Ronan and her sister isle ;
By Coll and green Tiree ;
And by the giant crags of Mull
That frown upon the sea ;
By Ulva's isle and Fingal's cave,
Palace and wonder of the wave ;—

V.

Still on—still on—till morning dawn
The boat pursued its way :
Still on—still on—till night, slow-drawn,
Through sleet and vapour gray,
It held its course amid the Isles,
Nor stopp'd by night or day ;

And still the figure, heeding nought,
Sat silent, gather'd in his thought.

VI.

Behind the boat, the waters shone
With phosphorescent light—
Slow from the keel, like glancing steel,
The waves fell off, all night.
At length, far looming through the mist
That now from heaven upclear'd,
Iona, sepulchre of kings,
The holy isle, appear'd—
The Culdee's bower, the place of graves,
The fair green "island of the waves."

VII.

The moon, new risen, look'd forth from heaven,
And purpled every height,
And waves upheaved their silvery sides,
Rejoicing in the light—
And mountain tops, with radiance touch'd,
Look'd placidly below,
As onwards to Iona's isle
The boat went gliding slow;
And the lone traveller stepp'd on shore,
Leaning upon the staff he bore.

VIII.

A long loose mantle wrapp'd his limbs,
A cowl conceal'd his head;
And meek yet lordly was his look,
And solemn was his tread.

And lo—to meet him on the beach,
A pale and shadowy band,
Barefoot, bareheaded, holding each
A taper in his hand,
Came in long line from Oran's shrine,
And gather'd on the strand.

IX.

No word was said, no sign was made,—
Spectres all pale and wan,
With earthward looks—'mid silence deep—
Their noiseless march began.
And slow they follow'd where he led ;
And, moved as by a blast,
The doors of St. Columba's kirk
Flew open as they pass'd,
And show'd the lights on roof and wall
Lit up for solemn festival.

X.

And choral voices sweet and clear,
Drawn out in cadence long,
Re-echoed through the vaulted aisles
Attuned to holy song ;
And music like a flowing tide
From organ-pipes unseen,
Pour'd forth a full majestic strain
Each solemn pause between ;
And myrrh and incense fill'd the air,
And shadowy lips were moved in prayer.

XL.

Each damp and moss-grown sepulchre,
Each vault and charnel cold,
Each grassy mound let forth its dead,
And from th' enfettering mould
Dim shadows of departed kings,
Sceptred and robed and crown'd,
And mitred bishops, meek and pale,
And abbots cowl'd and gown'd,
Came thronging in the moonlight gray
In long impalpable array.

XII.

And fierce Viking, swathed in mail,
Pallid and gaunt, stood forth,—
Old pirates, that to spoil the land
Had issued from the North.
Lords of the Isles, and Thanes, and Jarls,
Barons and Marmors grim,
With helm on head and glaive in hand,
In rusty armour dim,
Responsive to some powerful call
Gather'd obedient, one and all.

XIII.

And now the choral voices hush'd,
And ceased the organ tone ;
As to the altar-steps, high raised,
Sad, silent, and alone,

The traveller pass'd.—To him all eyes
Turn'd reverent as he trod,
And whispering voices, each to each,
Proclaim'd the man of God—
Columba, in his ancient place,
Radiant with glory and with grace.

XIV.

Back fell his cowl—his mantle dropp'd,
And in a stream of light,
A halo round his aged head,
And robed in dazzling white—
The saint with smiles of heavenly love
Stretch'd forth his hands to pray,
And kings and thanes, and monks and jarls,
Knelt down in their array,
Silent, with pallid lips compress'd,
And hands cross'd humbly on their breast.

XV.

He craved a blessing on the Isles,
And named them, one by one—
Fair western isles that love the glow
Of the departing sun.—
From Arran looming in the south,
To northern Orcades,
Then to Iona back again,
Through all those perilous seas,
Three nights and days the saint had sail'd,
To count the Hebrides.

XVI.

He loved them for Iona's sake,
The isle of prayer and praise,
Where Truth and Knowledge found a home
When fallen on evil days.
And now he bless'd them, each and all,
And pray'd that evermore,
Plenty and peace, and Christian love,
Might smile on every shore,
And that their mountain-glens might be
The abiding-places of the free.

XVII.

Then, as he ceased, Kings, Abbots, Earls,
And all the shadowy train,
Rose from their knees, and choral songs
Re-echoed loud again—
And then were hush'd—the lights burn'd dim,
And ere the dawn of day,
The saint and all the ghostly choir
Dissolved in mist away :
Aërial voices sounding still
Sweet harmonies from Duni's hill.

XVIII.

And every year Columba makes,
While yet the summer smiles,
Alone, within his spectral boat,
The circuit of the isles ;—

And monks and abbots, thanes and kings,
From vault and charnel start,
Disburied, in the rite to bear
Their dim, allotted part,
And crave, upon their bended knees,
A blessing on the Hebrides.



THE "DREAM," BY BEAULY, ROSS-SHIRE.

[The high banks of the Beauly, near Kilmorack, in Ross-shire, are covered with birch-trees, ascending to a great height, with occasionally rocks, fir-plantations, and mountain-paths to vary the scene; and the river foaming and breaking into numerous falls below. This magnificent tract, which extends about three miles, is termed "the Dream," a name that seems to harmonize with the wild beauty of the landscape. The true orthography, however, is the *Drhuim*, signifying, in the Gaelic language, a ridge.—*The Highland Note-book*, by R. CARRUTHERS.]

I.

IN Lomond's isles the rowans grow,
In sweet Glennant the lintoeks tarry,
And grand is Cruachan by Loch Awe,
And bonny are the birks of Garry.
Belovèd spots!—yet dearer far,
And cherish'd in my heart more truly,
Are sweet Kilmorack's lingering falls,
The lovely "Dream" and banks of Beauly.

II.

The joyous river runs its course,
Now dark and deep, now clear and shallow;
And high on either side the rocks
Rise, crown'd with mosses green and yellow;
And birks, the "damsels of the wood,"
So slim and delicately shaded,
Stand in the clefts, and look below,
With graceful forms and tresses braided.

III.

And rowans flourish on the heights,
With scarlet bunches thickly studded,
And brambles, heavy-laden, trail
Their luscious berries purple-blooded ;
And on the bosom of the hills,
Wooing the bees, the modest heather
Waves to the wind its hardy bells,
And blossoms in the wildest weather.

IV.

Oh that I might, 'mid scenes like this,
In the fresh noon of life and feeling,
Build up a bower where I might dwell,
All nature to my soul revealing.
Far from the bustling crowds that swarm
'Mid the great city's endless riot,
How happily my days would flow
In converse with these woodlands quiet !

V.

Unmindful of the hollow pomp
And festering coronet of splendour—
Heedless of Fame, and all the din
Of shouting voices that attend her ;—
With leisure, when my fancy led,
To roam the glen or forest thorough,
To climb the mountain-top, and trace
The torrent upward, by its furrow.—

VI.

To let the winds in stormy nights
Blow in my hair; to tread the heather
In tempest and in calm alike,
Braving, plaid-bound, the roughest weather;—
To hold communion night and day
With Nature—to her bosom turning
Aye for relief—and from her face
New hope, new joy, new wisdom learning.

VII.

Oh for a bower where I might dwell
In this contemplative seclusion,
With wealth sufficient for the wants
Of temperate Nature—not profusion.
A cottage on the green hill-side,
Sacred to friendship, love, and duty—
A garden fair, with trees for fruit,
And some for shadow and for beauty.

VIII.

Here, not unmindful of my kind,—
Flying the world, but never scorning,—
My voice, to solemn lay attuned,
Or cheerful as the lark's at morning,
Might reach the crowds that I had left,
And bear my thoughts to many a dwelling,
Where human hearts might throb to hear
The tale I would delight in telling.

III.

Past the isles of Shetland lay the monarch's path,
Round the isles of Orkney and the Cape of Wrath,
'Mid the Islands of the West
That obey'd his high behest—
The Lewis, and Uist, and Skye,
And the countless isles that lie
Between the wide Atlantic and Albyn's mountains
brown,
And paid him homage duly, and fealty to his crown.

IV.

Music and rejoicing follow'd on their way,
Drinking and carousing nightly till the day.
Every sailor in the fleet
Felt his heart with pleasure beat,
Every soldier in the ships
Had a smile upon his lips,
As he drank, and saw, in fancy, reeking sword and
flaming brand,
And the rapine, and the violence, and the carnage of
the land.

V.

Not amid the mountains of the rugged North
Would the mighty Haco send his legions forth ;
Not by highland loch or glen
Would he land his eager men ;—
Not on banks of moorland stream
Were their thirsty swords to gleam ;—

But further to the southward, from the rocks of bare
Argyll
To the sloping hills of Renfrew, and the grassy meads
of Kyle.

VI.

In the vales of Carrick, smiling by the sea,
In the woods of Lennox, in the Lothians three,
There was fatness all the year—
There were sheep and fallow-deer—
There was mead to fill the horn—
There were kye and there was corn,—
There was food for hungry Norsemen, with spoil to
last them long,
And lordly towers to revel in, with music and with
song.

VII.

Like scarts upon the wing, by the hope of plunder led,
Pass'd the ships of Haco, with sails like pinions spread.
But the tidings went before
To the inland, from the shore ;
And from crag to mountain crag,
At the terror of his flag,
Arose a cry of warning, and a voice of loud alarm,
That call'd the startled multitudes to gather and to
arm.

VIII.

Every mountain-summit had its beal-fire bright ;
All Argyll, ere sunset, crown'd its hills with light,

And from Morven to Cantyre
Lit the chain of signal-fire ;
From Cantyre to Cowal's coast
Blazed a warning of the host
Of savage Norse invaders that to spoil and harry came,
With their lust and with their hunger—with the
sword and with the flame.

IX.

Glen call'd out to mountain—mount to moorland
brown,
Village call'd to village, town gave voice to town ;—
And the bells in every tower
Rang the tocsin hour by hour,
Until old Dunedin heard,
And the Lothians three were stirr'd,
And sent their yeomen westward to struggle hand to
hand
For their wives and for their children, for their home
and native land.

X.

Wives had no endearment for a laggard lord ;
Maidens had no love-looks and no kindly word
For the lover who was slow
To march out against the foe.
Even maids themselves put on
Coat of mail and habergeon ;
Threw the snood off for the helmet, left the distaff for
the spear,
To die for sake of Scotland, with a sire or lover dear.

XI.

Young King Alexander march'd his legions forth,
From eastward to the westward, from southward to
the north :
High his flashing falchion gleam'd,
In his blue eye valour beam'd,
In his heart high courage glow'd,
As in pride of youth he rode
With the flower of Scotland's people, to defend her
sacred soil,
And repel the Norse marauders that came down for
blood and spoil.

XII.

With him rode the Comyn, grown in battles gray,
With a thousand bowmen ready for the fray,
With a tongue to give command,
And a rough untiring hand ;
With a cheek in combat scarr'd,
And a soul to pity hard ;
When he drew his sword for battle, and flung away
the sheath,
It was death to him who struggled with the Comyn of
Monteith.

XIII.

And the Bishop of St. Andrew's, a priest but in his
name,
In his heart a soldier, with all his warriors came.
And the stalwart Earl of Fife
Led his vassals to the strife—

Full a thousand fighting-men,
Strong of hand and sharp of ken,
And ready each to die at the bidding of his lord ;
But readier still for Scotland to draw the avenging
sword.

XIV.

From his northern mountains and his lochs afar
March'd the Earl of Caithness, ready aye for war,
With his pibroch sounding shrill
To his clansmen of the hill ;
And the Earl of March, new wed,
Left his happy bridal bed
At the first war-cry of danger that broke upon his
ears,
And join'd King Alexander, with twice a thousand
spears.

XV.

Thirsting for the conquest, eager for the fray,
Haco sail'd by Arran at the dawn of day ;
But as up the Firth of Clyde
He came proudly with the tide,
Rose a storm upon the deep,
And with wild and fitful sweep
Howl'd aloft amid the rigging ; while the sun look'd
pale and wan,
Through the clouds and driving vapours as the tempest
hurried on.

XVI.

To the ship of Haco came his stanchest men—
Holder, Sweno, Ratho, Hingst, and Innisfen,
Irminsule, and Loke and Harr,
Each a chieftain fierce in war ;
In the foray, hand to hand,
On the sea or on the land ;
Loving fighting more than counsel, blazing torch than
morning shine ;
The foremost in the battle, and the hindmost at the
wine.

XVII.

Short was Haco's counsel, and the signal flew
From captain on to captain, from crew again to crew,
That by Largs, ere noon of day,
They should land within the bay,—
And through all the ships there ran
A rejoicing, man with man,
That the hour had come at last, when the sword should
leave its sheath,
And the cloth-yard shaft its quiver for the revelry of
death.

XVIII.

Scotland's king was ready—Scotland's patriot men,
Marshall'd round their monarch from mountain, strath,
and glen,
And from every height around
Seem'd to issue from the ground.

Thirty thousand men that day
Met the Norsemen in the bay,
And fought, but not for pillage, nor for glory in the
 strife,
But for God and for their country—for their freedom
 and their life.

XIX.

Loud the shock resounded on the battle-field,
Clink of sword and buckler, clang of spear and
 shield;
Whirr of arrows in the blast,
On their errand flying fast;
And a shouting loud and high,
And a shrill continuous cry,
From either side arising, as th' impetuous legions
 met,
And the green fresh sward was trodden deep, and
 dank, and gory-wet.

XX.

Loud the voice of Haco sounded 'mid the fray,
Alexander's louder cheer'd the Scots that day;
And the kings press'd on to meet,
Through the arrows thick as sleet,
Through the living and the dead,
Holding high the dauntless head—
To fight in single combat, and to struggle hand to hand,
For the glory of the battle and the mastery of the
 land.

XXI.

And the fierce Earl Comyn sought the Norseman
Harr ;
The Bishop singled Ratho from the ranks of war ;
And the Earls of March and Fife,
In the sharp-contested strife,
Fought with Irminsule and Loke,
Thrust for thrust, and stroke for stroke ;
And the Earl of Caithness drove the haughty Innisfen
Back again into the ocean with a hundred of his men.

XXII.

Harr fell deadly wounded by the Comyn's blade ;
Ratho fled to seaward, faint and sore dismay'd ;
While Loke, with mortal wound,
Fell exhausted on the ground,
And Hingst sank down to rest
With the death-shaft in his breast ;
When a sudden panic seized on the whole Norwegian
foe,
And they fled like flying dust, when the Norland
tempests blow.

XXIII.

Down upon them swooping in their sudden rout,
Came King Alexander with exulting shout—
Crying, "Strike for Scotland's sake,
And a bloody vengeance take
For the insult borne too long—
For the centuries of wrong,—

For the murder and the ravage they have done within
our lands ;—
Down upon them, Scottish hearts ! Strike, and spare
not, Scottish hands !” .

XXIV.

Fighting, flying, struggling—with his scatter'd host
Haco saw, despairing, that the day was lost.
Of his twenty thousand men
Not a third were left him then,
The fearful tale to tell
Of the slaughter that befel ;
And Haco, iron-hearted, who had never wept before,
With his hands his pale face cover'd, and sobb'd upon
the shore.

XXV.

Flying their pursuers, faint, with pallid lips,
Haco and his captains stagger'd to their ships ;
And ere nightfall, many a one,
That had sail'd when day begun
As if life were in her sides
To defy the winds and tides,
Was driven before the tempest, her tall mast snapp'd
in twain,
A helpless wreck on Arran, ne'er to sail the seas again.

XXVI.

Through the Kyles, storm-batter'd, Haco held his way,
By Cantyre and Islay on to Colonsay :

And when dawn'd the morning light
Not a vessel was in sight,
But his own ship scudding by
On the gloomy shore of Skye,
Dismantled 'mid the hurricane that still around him blew,
With danger all around him and a spirit-broken crew

XXVII.

Thus he sail'd to Orkney ; but by night nor day,
To his men around him, did one word betray
All the anguish of his heart—
Though at times a sudden start,
And a short uneasy pace,
And the flushing of his face,
Show'd the grief and rage within him, as he mourn'd
 with silent lips
For his hope of conquest lost, for his sailors and his
 ships.

XXVIII.

In the bay of Kirkwall, shelter'd from the gale,
His sad crew dropp'd their anchor, and furl'd the
 tatter'd sail.
And the King was led on shore,
Weak, and faint, and spirit-sore,
Seeing—heeding—knowing nought
But his own despairing thought—
A thought of bitter shame, that he had not died that
 day,
With his face towards the mountains, in the thickest
 of the fray.

XXIX.

To his couch they led him, once so bold and strong,
And they watch'd beside him tenderly and long ;
But all human care was vain
To relieve him of his pain :
So the mighty Haco died
In his sorrow and his pride,
And they buried him in Orkney ; and Norsemen
 never more
Set sail to harry Scotland, or plunder on her shore.



THE EVE OF FLODDEN.

["In the church of Linlithgow is shown the aisle where an apparition burst upon the sight of James IV., to warn him against the expedition, and which, as Lindsay of Pitscottie relates, as soon as it had delivered its message, 'vanished like a blink of the sun, or a whip of the whirlwind.' When the invading army was encamped upon the Boroughmuir, numberless midnight apparitions did squeak and gibber upon the streets of Edinburgh, threatening woe to the kingdom, and there was a spectral procession of heralds, who advanced to the Cross, and summoned the king and a long list of nobility to their final doom."]

I.

Who are these so dim and wan,
Haggard, gaunt, and woe-begone!
Who in suits of silvery mail
Wander in the moonlight pale,
Through Dunedin's narrow street,
Sad and slow,
And with mournful voice repeat,
Singing low—
"Dim the night, but dark the morrow—
Long shall last the coming sorrow,—
Woe to Scotland, woe!"

II.

Helm on head and sword in hand,
Whence this melancholy band?
Even the banner that they bear
Droops dejected on the air,

As they walk with noiseless tread
To and fro,
And the sleeper from his bed
Rises slow,
Listening to that chant of sorrow—
“Dim the night, but dark the morrow—
Woe to Scotland, woe!”

III.

What they are, and their intent—
Whence they come, and whither bent—
If they come from kirkyard cold,
Or are men of mortal mould,
No one knows;—but all night long,
As they go,
There is heard a doleful song,
Clear, but low,—
“Deep the grief that’s now beginning,
Scotland’s loss is England’s winning—
Woe to Scotland, woe!”

IV.

Never yet Dunedin’s street
Saw such ghastly warriors meet.
Now upon the Cross they stay;
And a radiance clear as day,
When the day is dim and chill,
Seems to glow
All around; and from the hill
Overflow

Gable, tower, and steeple-crosses,
And the lonely wynds and closes:—

“Woe to Scotland, woe!”

V.

One steps forward from the rest,
Stately, gaunt, and richly dress'd ;
And they form a circle round,
Sadly looking to the ground ;
And a summons loud and shrill

Sounds below,

Downwards from the Calton Hill

Passing slow ;

Then a trumpet-call to rally

Echoes over mount and valley—

“Woe to Scotland, woe!”

VI.

Then the ling'ring echoes die
Faint and fainter on the sky,
And the spokesman of the band
Raises high his mail'd right hand,
And exclaims with earnest voice,

Speaking slow :

“Long will Scotland's foes rejoice:—

Hearts shall glow

At recital of our story,

And of Scotland's faded glory.

Woe to Scotland, woe!”

VII.

“Nought shall bravely avail ;
Dust before the wild March gale
Flies not faster than shall fly
Scotland's proudest chivalry,
Royal Stuart, when thy might
Stricken low,
Shall be scatter'd in the fight
By the foe,
And thy fairest ranks be trodden
On the bloody field of Flodden.
Woe to Scotland, woe !

VIII.

“Crawford, Huntley, and Montrose !
Loud your shrill war-trumpet blows ;—
Home and Bothwell ! high in air
Flaunt your banners free and fair ;—
Lennox ! well your stalwart men
Wield the bow ;—
Fierce and fleet from hill and glen
On the foe,
From wild Cowal to the Grampians,
Rush, Argyll ! your stoutest champions ;—
Woe to Scotland, woe !

IX.

“But in vain shall they unite ;
And in vain their swords shall smite ;

And in vain their chiefs shall lead ;
Vainly, vainly shall they bleed ;—
England's hosts shall smite them down
 At a blow,
And our country's ancient crown
 Be laid low ;
And for warrior's death-cold sleeping
Long shall last the wail and weeping—
 Woe to Scotland woe !”

X.

Thus he speaks, and glides away,
Melting in the moonlight gray :
And the pale knights follow on
Through the darkness, and are gone.
But all night is heard the wail
 Rising slow,
As the pauses of the gale
 Come and go,—
“Dim the night and dark the morrow ;
Long shall last the coming sorrow—
 Woe to Scotland, woe !”



THE KELPIE OF CORRYVRECKAN.

[This story is a common one in the Western Isles, and among all the northern nations of Europe. Some of the incidents bear a resemblance to the Danish ballad of "The Wild Waterman," a translation of which was made into German, by Goethe.]

I.

HE mounted his steed of the water clear,
And sat on his saddle of sea-weed sere ;
He held his bridle of strings of pearl,
Dug out of the depths where the sea-snakes curl.

II.

He put on his vest of the whirlpool froth,
Soft and dainty as velvet cloth,
And donn'd his mantle of sand so white,
And grasp'd his sword of the coral bright.

III.

And away he gallop'd, a horseman free,
Spurring his steed through the stormy sea,
Clearing the billows with bound and leap—
Away, away, o'er the foaming deep !

IV.

By Scarba's rock, by Lunga's shore,
By Garveloch isles where the breakers roar,
With his horse's hoofs he dash'd the spray,
And on to Loch Buy, away, away!

V.

On to Loch Buy all day he rode,
And reach'd the shore as sunset glow'd,
And stopp'd to hear the sounds of joy
That rose from the hills and glens of Moy.

VI.

The morrow was May, and on the green
They'd lit the fire of Beltan E'en,
And danced around, and piled it high
With peat and heather and pine-logs dry.

VII.

A piper play'd a lightsome reel,
And timed the dance with toe and heel;
While wives look'd on, as lad and lass
Trod it merrily o'er the grass.

VIII.

And Jessie (fickle and fair was she)
Sat with Evan beneath a tree,
And smiled with mingled love and pride,
And half agreed to be his bride.

IX.

The Kelpie gallop'd o'er the green—
He seem'd a knight of noble mien,
And old and young stood up to see,
And wonder'd who the knight could be.

X.

His flowing locks were auburn bright,
His cheeks were ruddy, his eyes flash'd light;
And as he sprang from his good gray steed,
He look'd a gallant youth indeed.

XI.

And Jessie's fickle heart beat high,
As she caught the stranger's glancing eye;
And when he smiled, "Ah well," thought she,
"I wish this knight came courting me!"

XII.

He took two steps towards her seat—
"Wilt thou be mine, O maiden sweet?"
He took her lily-white hand, and sigh'd,
"Maiden, maiden, be my bride!"

XIII.

And Jessie blush'd, and whisper'd soft—
"Meet me to-night when the moon's aloft;—
I've dream'd, fair knight, long time of thee—
I thought thou camest courting me."

XIV.

When the moon her yellow horn display'd,
Alone to the trysting went the maid ;
When all the stars were shining bright,
Alone to the trysting went the knight.

XV.

"I have loved thee long, I have loved thee well,
Maiden, oh more than words can tell !
Maiden, thine eyes like diamonds shine ;
Maiden, maiden, be thou mine !"

XVI.

"Fair sir, thy suit I'll ne'er deny—
Though poor my lot, my hopes are high ;
I scorn a lover of low degree—
None but a knight shall marry me."

XVII.

He took her by the hand so white,
And gave her a ring of the gold so bright ;
"Maiden, whose eyes like diamonds shine—
Maiden, maiden, now thou'rt mine !"

XVIII.

He lifted her up on his steed of gray,
And they rode till morning away, away—
Over the mountain and over the moor,
And over the rocks, to the dark sea-shore.

XIX.

"We have ridden east, we have ridden west—
I'm weary, fair knight, and I fain would rest.
Say, is thy dwelling beyond the sea?
Hast thou a good ship waiting for me?"

XX.

"I have no dwelling beyond the sea,
I have no good ship waiting for thee:
Thou shalt sleep with me on a couch of foam,
And the depths of the ocean shall be thy home."

XXI.

The gray steed plunged in the billows clear,
And the maiden's shrieks were sad to hear.
"Maiden, whose eyes like diamonds shine—
Maiden, maiden, now thou'rt mine!"

XXII.

Loud the cold sea-blast did blow,
As they sank 'mid the angry waves below—
Down to the rocks where the serpents creep,
Twice five hundred fathoms deep.

XXIII.

At morn a fisherman sailing by
Saw her pale corse floating high:
He knew the maid by her yellow hair
And her lily skin so soft and fair.

XXIV.

Under a rock on Scarba's shore,
Where the wild winds sigh and the breakers roar,
They dug her a grave by the water clear,
Among the sea-weed salt and sere.

XXV.

And every year, at Beltan E'en,
The Kelpie gallops across the green,
On a steed as fleet as the wintry wind,
With Jessie's mournful ghost behind.

XXVI.

I warn you, maids, whoever you be,
Beware of pride and vanity ;
And ere on change of love you reckon,
Beware the Kelpie of Corryvreckan.



LORD NITHSDALE'S DREAM IN THE TOWER OF
LONDON.

[In the notes to Cromeek's Remains of Nithsdale and Galloway Song will be found the full particulars of Lord Nithsdale's escape narrated in the simple and touching language of Winifred Lady Nithsdale, in a letter to her sister.]

I.

"FAREWELL to thee, Winifred, dearest and best !
Farewell to thee, wife of a courage so high !
Come hither, and nestle again in my breast,
Come hither, and kiss me again ere I die !
And when I am laid bleeding and low in the dust,
And yield my last breath at a tyrant's decree,
Look up—be resign'd—and the God of the just
Will shelter thy fatherless children and thee."

II.

She wept on his breast, but, ashamed of her fears,
She dash'd off the drops that ran warm down
her cheek—
"Be sorrow for those who have leisure for tears,
Oh, pardon thy wife, that her soul was so weak !
There is hope for us still, and I will not despair,
Though cowards and traitors exult at thy fate ;
I'll show the oppressors what woman can dare—
I'll show them that love can be stronger than hate."

III.

Lip to lip—heart to heart—and their fond arms
entwined—

He has clasp'd her again, and again, and again ;—
“Farewell to thee, Winifred, pride of thy kind,
Sole ray in my darkness—sole joy in my pain.”
She has gone! He has heard the last sound of her
tread—

He has caught the last glimpse of her robes at the
door
She has gone! and the joy that her presence had shed,
Will cheer the sad heart of Lord Nithsdale no
more.

IV.

The prisoner pray'd in his dungeon alone,
And thought of the morn and its dreadful array ;
Then rested his head on his pillow of stone,
And slumber'd an hour ere the dawning of day.
Oh, balm of the weary !—oh, soother of pain !
That still to the sad givest pity and dole,
How gently, O Sleep, lay thy wings on his brain !
How sweet were thy dreams to his desolate soul !

V.

Once more on his green native braes of the Nith
He plucked the wild breckan, a frolicsome boy ;
He sported his limbs in the waves of the frith ;
He trod the green heather in gladness and joy ;

On his gallant gray steed to the hunting he rode—
In his bonnet a plume, on his bosom a star—
And chased the red-deer to its mountain abode,
And track'd the wild roe to its covert afar.

VI.

The vision has changed ;—in a midsummer night
He roam'd with his Winifred blooming and young ;
He gazed on her face by the moon's mellow light,
And loving and warm were the words on his
tongue ;
Through good and through evil he swore to be true,
And love through all fortune his Winnie alone—
And he saw the red blush o'er her cheek as it flew,
And heard her sweet voice that replied to his
own.

VII.

Once more it has changed ; in his martial array
Lo ! he rode at the head of his gallant young
men,
For the pilroch was heard on the hills far away,
And the clans were all gathered from mountain
and glen.
For the darling of Scotland, their exile adored ;
They raised the loud slogan—they rushed to the
strife,
Unfurl'd was the banner—unsheathed was the sword,
For the cause of their heart, that was dearer than
life.

VIII.

Again—and the vision was lost to his sight ;
But the phantom that followed was darksome and
dread—

The morn of his doom had succeeded the night,
And a priest by his side said the prayers for the dead.
He heard the dull sound of the slow muffled drum,
And the hoarse sullen boom of the death-tolling bell.
The block was prepared and the headsman had come,
And the victim, bareheaded, walked forth from
his cell.

IX.

No ! no ! 'twas but fancy—his hour was not yet—
And, waking, he turned on his pallet of straw,
And a form by his side he could never forget,
By the pale misty light of a taper he saw ;—
“ 'Tis I—'tis thy Winifred ! ”—softly she said,
“ Arouse thee, and follow—be bold—never fear ;
There was danger abroad, but my errand has sped—
I promised to save thee, and lo—I am here ! ”

X.

He rose at the summons ; but little they spoke ;—
The gear of a lady she placed on his head ;
She covered his limbs with a womanly cloak,
And painted his cheeks of a maidenly red.
“ One kiss, my dear lord—and begone—and beware—
Walk softly—I follow ! O ! guide us and save
From the open assault, from the intricate snare,
Thou Providence, friend of the suffering brave ! ”

XI.

They passed unsuspected the guard at the cell,
And the sentinels weary that watched at the gate ;
One danger remained—but they conquer'd it well—
Another—and Love triumphed still over Hate.
And long ere the morning, their ship was at sea,
Sailing down with fair winds, far away from the
shore,
To the land of the Gaul, where their hearts might
be free,
And the quarrels of monarchs disturb them no
more.



THE SHOAL OF WHALES.

I.

CALM and unruffled is the bay,
There is not even a breath at play,
To make a ripple in the sun,
That since this summer day begun,
Has shown the Hebridean isles
A cloudless visage, bright with smiles.
On the low rocks that fringe the sea,
The brown dulse welters lazily ;
The seagulls hovering, milky white,
Display their pinions to the light,
And dart and wheel with sudden cry,
Or drop like snow-flakes from the sky.

II.

The minister is in the manse,
His open Bible on his knees ;
His daughters in the garden walk,
And prune their stunted apple-trees,
By high walls shelter'd from the breeze,
That comes salt-laden from the beach ;
Or lift the tender floweret's stalk
Which rains have beaten to the ground ;
Or guard their solitary peach
From birds, by network round.

III.

The fisher's wife beside her door
Sits mending nets, and crooning o'er
Some old sad Gaelic lay ;
And children paddle in the brine,
Or watch the fair white sails that shine
In sunlight o'er the bay,
Or hide and seek 'mid boats that lie
Keel upwards, on the beach to dry.

IV.

Peace broods upon that Western isle ;—
When a lone fisher on the sand,
Loitering along with vacant smile,
Suddenly stops, and with his hand
Shades his face from the light of the skies,
And summons his soul into his eyes,
To look if his sight deceives him not ;—
Lo !—there !—where sky and ocean blend !—
He fixes his gaze upon the spot—
The glittering cascades ascend
Twenty feet high—then rustle down
On the backs of the monsters, bare and brown ;
Again—and again—he sees them roll—
There are whales in the bay—A shoal ! A shoal !

V.

In the fulness of his joy, his face
Reddens—and his quick eager shout,
Echoing over that silent place,
Calls the inquiring people out.

“The whales!” he cries—and to behold
Come the youthful and the old;
Come the feeble and the strong;
Men and women and girls; with boys,
That whether for right, or whether for wrong,
Delight in the tumult and the noise;
Rushing down with trampling feet,
And cries that the echoing hills repeat.

VI.

And now the uproar thicker grows—
From side to side the clapper goes
In the kirk bell, as if its power
Had been redoubled for this hour;
As if in such a cause inspired,
It summon'd with gladness all the flock;
And flags are waved, and guns are fired,
And bonfires kindled on the rock;
And that lone isle of the Western sea
Prepares for a day of jubilee.

VII.

“Leviathan! Leviathan!”

The minister cries, and shuts his book;
And though a man of peace is he,
As a preacher of the Word should be,
He takes his musket from a nook,
Rusty and old; and hastes away
To join his people in the bay.

VIII.

His daughters fair have saddled their steeds,
Two young ponies sleek and brown ;
And with flashing eyes and streaming hair,
And heads uncover'd, have galloped down
To see the sport—perchance to share.
Old men have left their usual place
By warm firesides, to join the chase,
And one bedridden, half-crazy soul
Has started up at the people's roar,
And the joyous cry "a shoal! a shoal!"
And hobbled on crutches to the door,
To envy the limbs of the passers-by,
And watch the sport with kindling eye.

IX.

The women have left their spinning-wheels,
Their hose, their nets, their fishing-creels,
And arm'd themselves with pikes and staves
To follow the monsters of the waves.
Fifty boats at least are ready—
With rowers strong and helmsmen steady,
To drive the whales into shallow water,
And dye the beach with the blood of slaughter.

X.

Merrily ring the bells—
Merrily wave the flags—
Merrily shout the people
That watch upon the crags.

Merrily row the boats—
Merrily swell the sails—
And merrily go the islanders
To chase the mighty whales.
And quietly prays the preacher
For a blessing and reward
Upon harpoon and musket,
Upon the spear and sword,
That shall slay the great Leviathan,
For the glory of the Lord.

XI.

And steady—steady—steady—
Until their backs appear ;
And ready—ready—ready—
With the musket and the spear !
Behold the spouts upheaving,
Their sides the water cleaving—
A shot is fired—and a sudden roar
Proclaims approval on the shore ;
And barb'd harpoons with lengthening twine
Are launch'd unerring o'er the brine,
And the water-spouts, that a minute ago
Were clear as the discongealing snow,
Rise ruddy in air like founts of wine ;—
And the wounded whales, in their agony,
Plunge in fury through the sea,
And lash the waters into froth,
Blood-crimson'd by their pain and wrath.

XII.

In vain ye struggle—luckless whales ;—
Your numbers were a score—
But ten of you shall not escape
To swim the salt seas more.
For ye have come to a needy land,
And to a perilous shore,
Where they will turn your bones to wealth—
Make coinage of your spoil,
And give their virgins when they wed
A dowry of your oil ;—
Where men will sit around their hearths,
Reposing from their toil,
And long that every day may see
Such slaughter and such revelry.

XIII.

Again—again—the muskets ring,
And scare the sea-birds on the wing ;
And not a shot is fired this day
That fails to reach its mark—and slay.
Strong hands impel the heavy spear,
Or drive the double-edged harpoon ;
And the fair bay, whose waters clear
Were stainless underneath the moon,
Shall roll to-night a darker flood,
And see its billows streak'd with blood.

XIV.

'Tis done—the unequal strife is o'er—
The dying whales are driven ashore ;

And long ere setting of the sun,
Their carcasses are haul'd to land ;
Where, stretch'd unwieldy on the sand,
Men count the prizes they have won ;—
Twelve monsters huge, whose bones shall bring
Enjoyment for the wintry nights,
Whose oil shall make the wretched sing,
And fill the needy with delights.
And round about the children go,
With gladness fill'd to overflow,
To hear the joyous bells resound,
And see the bonfires blazing round.

XV.

This night shall mirth be unrestrain'd,
Its blood in quicker pulses driven ;
And many a flowing cup be drain'd,
And many a loving pledge be given ;
And even the minister himself
Shall lay his Bible on the shelf,
And join his elders o'er a bowl
To drink a welcome to the shoal.
And every dweller in the isle
Shall hold a festival the while,
And mark in memory's tablets clear,
This day the fairest of the year.

THE WITCH OF SKERRIEVORE.

I.

"WE were sisters, sisters seven—
The fairest women under heaven ;
One was calm, serene, and fair—
One had locks of auburn hair—
One had lips like parted cherries—
One had cheeks like autumn berries—
One had eyes where pity glow'd—
One a smile where love abode ;
Comely, ruddy, graceful, tall ;
And I the fairest of them all.

II.

"Oh my sisters !—sisters sweet,
Dancing with their nimble feet,
Mingling voices all the day
In a happy roundelay,
Wreathing flowers to bind their hair,
With their smiles dispelling care,
Scattering pleasures as they went,
To the world's enravishment,
Oh my sisters ! oh their fall ;
Love destroy'd them one and all !

III.

"Fairest blossoms of our clime,
They were blighted ere their time :
One was sear'd by slander's breath—
One, too loving, pined to death—
One, deceived, and smitten low,
In her madness lost her woe—
One, we thought a maiden mild,
In her frenzy slew her child—
One, with hopes and passions strong,
Lived for vengeance, but not long :
I alone escaped their fall—
I alone, amid them all.

IV.

"Never have I loved a man ;
Never will I—never can ;
Smile, nor tear, nor passion-word
Never yet my heart has stirr'd ;
Never shall they : Hate is free—
Love abides in slavery.
I have other joys than this,
Hotter pleasures, fiercer bliss,
As upon the winds I go,
Flying, floating to and fro !

V.

"Up in the air ! up in the air !
In foul weather, and in fair.

I have made a compact free
With the sprites of air and sea,
To do my bidding willingly.
I can ride the fleetest wind,
And leave the lazy clouds behind,
Or swim the surf where breakers roar
Amid the rocks of Skerrievore,
Working mischief as I go,
Floating, flying to and fro!

VI.

"Up in the air! up in the air!
Before the watchman is aware,
I love to rattle the chimneys down,
And rock the belfries of the town!
Oh, 'tis sweet o'er field and copse
To rush from the barren mountain-tops,
To strip the garden of flower and fruit,
To scatter the pine-trees branch and root,
To loosen the wreaths of drifted snow,
And roll the avalanche below!

VII.

"Oh, 'tis sweet to ride the blast,
To rend the sail from the creaking mast,
To dash the billows amid the shrouds,
To hide the moon in the driving clouds,

To sweep the sailor from the deck,
And cast his ship on the rocks a wreck,
And drown his last expiring cry
In the howl of tempests rushing by!

VIII.

“Up in the air! up in the air!
I avenge my sisters fair;
On mankind I vent my wrath,
Strewing dangers in his path.
For this I’ve made a compact free
With the powers of air and sea,
That I shall rue eternally!
But hate is joy—and this is mine,
To ride the wind, to sail the brine,
And work fierce mischief as I go,
Floating, flying to and fro.”

IX.

Ye that sail the stormy seas
Of the distant Hebrides,
By Scarba’s rock, and Colonsay,
And old Iona’s Minster gray,
By far Tiree, the flow’ry isle,
And Staffa’s wondrous cave and pile,
By Jura, with her treble hills,
And Skye, far looming, seam’d with rills,
By barren Mull and Ulva’s shore,
Beware the Witch of Skerrievore!

THE BURN OF ABERIACHAN.

I.

I LOVE, oh bonnie Aberiachan,
Thy wild and tumbling flood,
So gently down the rocks thou leapest,
So softly in thy linns thou sleepest,
Such silvery bubbles stud
Thy glancing bosom, and so green
Grows on thy back each birken bough,
I never saw a waterfall
More beautiful than thou.

II.

'Tis true, unlike thy roaring neighbour,
Thy voice is sweet and low :
The mighty Foyers speak in thunder—
Thou whisperest thy birch-trees under,
To winds that o'er thee blow ;
And after showers of spring-time rain,
When every burnie bounds along,
Thy voice, so musical and soft,
But swells into a song.

III.

Yet more than Foyers, grand and solemn,
I love thy limpid face :
He awes us by his power and splendour—
Thou, like a maiden kind and tender,
Subduest by thy grace.
And in the sunny summer-time,¹
From morn to night, I would rejoice
To lie upon thy flowery banks,
And listen to thy voice.

IV.

Or underneath thy shelving summits,
Where tufted mosses grow—
Between the green o'erhanging birches,
Where all day long the lintie perches,
Mine idle limbs I'd throw :
And there I'd lie, until I sank
To a half-slumber, 'mid the trees,
Lull'd by thy confidential talk,
Or murmur of thy bees.

V.

Or if I woke to dreams of fancy,
Beneath thy steepest fall
I'd sit, and weave some thoughtful treasure
Into the light and airy measure,
Of chant or madrigal :—

Or haply, in some genial hour,
Interpret into words the song
Thou singest down the mountain side,
When autumn floods are strong—

VI.

Ev'n all the secret things thou breathest,
From thy translucent breast,
To the high mountains cold and hoary,
Or the calm loch that, girt with glory,
Receives thee from the west ;—
Thy secret hymn of thankfulness
For all the beauty spread around,
Upon the loch, upon the hills,
Upon the pasture-ground.

VII.

I know thee, bonnie Aberiachan !
I know that thou canst raise
The song of joy ; and that thou flowest
With cheerful strength where'er thou goest,
Through all thy hidden ways.—
Let me be like thee, and rejoice,
That if no Foyers high and strong,
I still can lift a grateful voice,
And glorify in song ;

VIII.

That I can see a beauty round me,
From many an eye conceal'd ;
That Nature, kind to those who love her,
Will still to them her face uncover,
And love for loving yield.
Let me, like thee, run cheerily on,
And sing my song, though none may hear ;
Rewarded, if I please the few,
And keep a current clear.

ABERIACHAN, LOCH NESS,
INVERNESS-SHIRE, 1844.



THE WRAITH OF GARRY WATER.

I.

"Go, Evan! go;—the heart you swore
In weal and woe alike to cherish,
You've broken by your cold deceit,
And thrown upon the world to perish.

II.

"A woman's curse is hard to bear—
But may be turn'd, if love endeavour;
But the curse of a man with hoary hair,
It weighs upon the soul for ever.

III.

"And for the wrong that you have done,
Upon your head all sorrow gather.
And in your soul, for evermore,
Deep sink the curses of a father!"

IV.

The old man bared his gray, gray head,
And clasp'd his wither'd hands together;
And Evan curl'd his lip in scorn,
And rode his way across the heather.

V.

"Why should I heed this dotard's words?
The needle from the pole will vary—
And time will wear and hearts will change;—
I love no more his bonnie Mary.

VI.

"I trust that happy she may be,
Nor pine with sorrow overladen;
And she may love another man,
And I will love another maiden."

VII.

The night was fair—the moon was up—
The wind blew low among the gowans;
Or fitful rose o'er Athol woods,
And shook the berries from the rowans.

VIII.

And Evan rode through Garry strath,
And quite forgot the old man's daughter;
And when he came to Garry stream,
It ran a red and roaring water.

IX.

The summer rains had fallen fast,
The voice of streams made music merry;
And brae-side burnies leap'd and danced,
And mingled in the tide of Garry.

X.

And Bruar raised a joyful shout,
And Tilt to Ben-Y-Gloe resounded ;
And Tummel in the pride of strength,
Down to his fall, rejoicing, bounded.

XI.

Green were the birks on Garry braes,
Soft through their leaves the moon was peeping;
And 'mid the heather on the rock,
There sat a bonny maiden weeping.

XII.

Her kirtle seem'd of velvet green ;
Her robes were azure, loosely flowing ;
Her eyes shone bright amid her tears ;
Her lips were fresh as gowans growing.

XIII.

"What brings thee here, my lily-flower ?
High on the strath the storm-winds tarry ;
The night is chill—the hour is late ;—
Why weep'st thou by the banks of Garry ?"

XIV.

The maiden raised her tearful eyes,
And with her silvery voice replying,
Said, smoothing back her yellow locks,
And speaking low and softly sighing :—

XV.

"Though dark and swift the waters pour,
Yet here I wait in dool and sorrow ;
For bitter fate must I endure,
Unless I pass the stream ere morrow.

XVI.

"Oh ! aid me in this deep distress,
Nor seek its causes to unravel ;
My strength, alas ! is weak at best,
And I am worn with toil and travel."

XVII.

"Though swift," said Evan, "is the flood,
My good bay mare is strong and steady ;
So trust thee lassie to my care,
And quickly mount and make thee ready.

XVIII.

"For one glance of those eyes of blue,
Thy bonnie burden I will carry ;
For one kiss of those honey lips,
I'll guide thee o'er the raging Garry.

XIX.

"What is it ails my good bay mare ?
What is it makes her start and shiver ?
She sees a Kelpie in the stream,
Or fears the rushing of the river.

XX.

"Ah, coward jade!—but heed her not,
For, maiden dear, we may not tarry ;—
The beast has swum a swifter flood ;
I'll see thee safely through the Garry."

XXI.

They mounted on the good bay mare—
But vainly Evan strove to guide her ;
Through all her frame a terror crept—
She trembled at her bonnie rider.

XXII.

Then as she heard the maiden's voice,
And felt her gentle fingers pat her,
She gave a neigh as loud and shrill
As if an evil sprite had sat her.

XXIII.

And with a desperate bound she sprang
High from the bank into the current ;
While sounds of laughter seem'd to mix
Amid the roaring of the torrent.

XXIV.

The waters rush'd in eddying whirls,
And dash'd the foam-drops o'er the heather ;
And winds that seem'd asleep till then,
Let loose their fury altogether.

XXV.

Down—down—the awaken'd tempest blew—
And faster down the flood came pouring—
And horse and riders, overwhelm'd,
Sank 'mid the rush of waters roaring.

XXVI.

But on the surface of the flood,
Her yellow locks with spray-fall dripping,
The maiden with the kirtle green
And azure robe, came lightly tripping.

XXVII.

And now she sank, now rose again,
And dash'd the wave in rain-like shiver;
Then lay afloat, or tiptoe stood
Upon the foam-bells of the river:—

XXVIII.

And laugh'd the while, and clapp'd her hands—
Until at last the storm subsided,
When, like a gleam of parting light,
Away upon the mist she glided.

XXIX.

And Evan's corpse at morn was found,
Far down by Tummel, pale and mangled,
His features bruised by jutting rocks,
His auburn curls with gore entangled.

XXX.

Few were the mourners at his grave,
But 'mid them two—a sire and daughter;
And loud she sobb'd, and loud she wept,
Though tenderly her sire besought her.

XXXI.

“He loved me,—and he did me wrong,”
She said, “and darken'd all my morrow;
But in his grave Resentment sleeps,
While Love survives to feed on Sorrow.”



THE KING'S SON.

I.

"WHY so sorrowful, my son?
Why so pallid and distress'd?
Why that look so woe-begone?
And that heaving of the breast?
Hast not wealth enough to spend
On the joys thou lovest best?"

II.

"I have wealth enough to spend—
All thy jewels and thy gold,
All that usurers could lend,
Piled before me fifty-fold,
Could not ease me of the pain
That consumes me uncontroll'd."

III.

"Could not ease thee of thy pain?
Art thou longing for the hour
When thy sire shall cease to reign,
And thine enemies shall cower?
Art thou longing for my crown,
And my sceptre and my power?"

IV.

"No!—I care not for thy crown,
Nor thy sceptre, nor thy state,
Could my wishes cast thee down,
Thou shouldst flourish high and great ;
But thou'st done me mortal wrong—
And hast changed my love to hate.

V.

"Thou hast done me mortal wrong—
Thou, so feeble, old, and gray—
Thou, so weak, whilst I am strong,—
Thou hast stolen my bride away,
And art rival of thy son,
In the waning of thy day :

VI.

Art the rival of thy son
For a maid that he adored ;—
Hast her trusting heart undone,
Though she wept and she implored ;—
But she hates thee as do I,
Thou voluptuous—thou abhorr'd !

VII.

"But she hates thee as do I,
O thou rust upon the steel !
O thou cloud upon the sky !
O thou poison at the meal !
Who hast changed our joy to woe,
Which no time can ever heal !

VIII.

"Who hast changed our joy to woe,
Bringing blight upon her heart—
Bringing tears that, as they flow,
Burn the eyeballs where they start :
Buying beauty for a price,
Like a jewel in the mart.

IX.

"Buying beauty for a price,
When the priceless gem was mine ;
When thy blood is cold as ice,
Nor can warm with love or wine,—
Trying vainly to be young,
And to kneel at beauty's shrine.

X.

"Trying vainly to be young,
When thy limbs with palsy shake,
And to woo with flattering tongue,
When for Jesus' blessed sake
Thou shouldst make thy peace with God,
Ere the grave thy body take!"

XI.

Fiercely flash'd the old king's eye—
To his forehead rush'd the blood—
And the veins were swollen high
By the anger-driven flood ;
But his tongue refused to speak,
And he trembled where he stood.

H

XII.

But his tongue refused to speak
All the madness of his brain ;
From his eyes it seem'd to reek,
On his lips it curl'd in pain ;
In each feature of his face,
Swell'd in anger and disdain.

XIII.

In each feature of his face
Shone a moment, like a fire,
But no longer : from his place
Falling, conquer'd by his ire,
Senseless on the ground he lay,
Struck by apoplexy dire.

XIV.

O'er him bent his sorrowing son,
Weeping tears of bitter woe,
For the ill his words had done
To his father lying low,
With his venerable head, .
And his long hair white as snow.

XV.

And that venerable head,
Burning, throbbing, up he raised
On his knees, as on a bed,
And till succour came, still gazed
On that pain-distorted cheek,
Awed, remorseful, and amazed.

XVI.

Awed, remorseful, and heart-sore,
But with courage calm and kind,
To his couch his sire he bore,
Deep repentance in his mind ;
And for many a weary day
Watch'd him, patient and resign'd.

XVII.

And for many a weary day,
And for many a dreary night,
Watch'd beside him as he lay—
Senseless—speechless—hopeless quite.
Until sense, one day, return'd
Like a sudden flash of light.

XVIII.

Like a flash of light it came ;
And his son beside him knelt,
Grasp'd his hand and breathed his name,
And the sorrow that he felt
Whisper'd lowly, and implored
That forgiveness might be dealt.

XIX.

Whisper'd lowly, and implored—
“Oh, forgive me, sire,” he said—
“I am sad and self-abhorr'd—
I have wrong'd thine aged head,
I have mock'd thy hoary hair,
Impulse-driven and passion-led.

XX.

"I have mock'd the hoary hair
Of a sire that loved me well,
But when goaded to despair,
Youthful passion will rebel :
And I loved this lovely maid
More than tongue can ever tell.

XXI.

"God forgive me and the maid !
At her feet I breathed my sighs—
Doated on her, vow'd and pray'd—
Drew existence from her eyes,
Thought her love a light from heaven,
And her smile a paradise.

XXII.

"Thought her love a light from heaven,
And her form its purest shrine,
And my being only given
That with hers it might entwine
Heart and soul and every sense,
Mine with hers and hers with mine.

XXIII.

"Heart and soul through every sense,
One as long as life should last,
One desire, one love intense—
In one mould of fortune cast ;
Undivided in our love,
E'en if life itself were past.

XXIV.

“Undivided—oh, that thought!
Thou, O father! came between,
For thy wife my bride thou sought—
Woo'd this maid to be a queen,
Never asking, in thy pride,
What her agony might mean.

XXV.

“Never asking, in thy pride,
If she loved thee!”——“Oh, my son!”
Stung with grief, the father cried,
“Pardon what thy sire has done;
Ere this night I'll give thee back
Her thou hast not lost, but won.

XXVI.

“Ere this night I'll give thee back
Her thou lovest;—as for me,
If I writhe upon the rack,
Just my punishment will be;
I was selfish in my age,
I was heartless unto thee.

XXVII.

“I was selfish in my age;—
Lustful, callous, stony-hard;
Ending life's long pilgrimage,
Swaddled in my self-regard;
Caring not, so I enjoy'd,
Whose enjoyment I debarr'd.

XXVIII.

"Caring not, so I enjoy'd,
Whom I injured, whom oppress'd,
Whose the hope that I destroy'd,
If one moment I were bless'd.
But in living to repent,
I shall die with calmer breast.

XXIX.

"And in living to repent,
Let me hasten to atone,
She for whom thy prayers are sent—
She is thine, and thine alone,
And thy love shall be to her
Better guerdon than my throne.

XXX.

"Bring her hither—let my tongue
Bless you both before I die."
He has brought her; Lo among
Chiefs and earls of lineage high,
In her loveliness array'd,
She has glided modestly.

XXXI.

In her loveliness array'd,
Downwards looking, mild and meek,
Dazzling as a star, the maid,—
Happy blushes on her cheek,—
Kneels beside the old man's bed,
Fill'd with joy she cannot speak.

XXXII.

Kneels beside the old king's bed,
Sorrow mingling with her bliss ;
And he stoops his aged head,
On her forehead seals one kiss,
Takes his son's hand and the maid's,
Joins them, trembling, both in his.

XXXIII.

Clasp'd his son's hand in his own,
Then upon his pillow fell,
And his eyes one moment shone,
With a peace unspeakable,
As he died without a groan ;—
Holy angels guard him well !



THE LADY OF DUART'S VENGEANCE.

[The *Florida*, one of the Invincible Armada, was sunk at Tobermory by an emissary of Queen Elizabeth. This vessel is supposed to have contained a great deal of specie. The country tradition concerning it is, that a daughter of the King of Spain having dreamed that a young man of particularly engaging figure had appeared to her, determined to sail the wide world in search of the living prototype of the vision; Maclean of Duart realized in the princess's eyes the creations of her fancy. The wife of Maclean became jealous of his attentions to the fair stranger, and sought counsel of the witches of Mull, by whose agency the vessel was sunk with the object of her resentment.—*Anderson's Guide to the Highlands.*]

I.

"WEIRD woman, that dwellest on lofty Ben More,
Give ear to my sorrow, and aid, I implore.
A lady has come from the green sunny bowers
Of a far southern clime, to the mountains of ours;
A light in her eyes, but deceit in her heart,
And she lingers and lingers, and will not depart.

II.

"Through darkness and danger, 'mid tempest and rain,
She has sail'd to our shores from the vineyards of
Spain,
Forsaking her country, her kindred, her home,
Abroad through our cold Western islands to roam,
To find a young lover as fair to her sight
As a vision she saw in the slumbers of night.

III.

"And hither by stars inauspicious convey'd,
She has come, in her gems and her beauty array'd,
With a tongue full of sweetness—a heart insincere,
And wielding at will both the smile and the tear;
And fix'd her bright eyes on the chief of Maclean,
To toy with his heart, and bewilder his brain.

IV.

"And I, who was once the delight of his soul,
Ere *she* like a blight on my happiness stole,
Now wander through Duart, neglected and lorn,
Of a stranger the scoff—of my maidens the scorn;
With a grief in my bosom that gnaws to the core,
And a fire in my brain that will burn evermore:

V.

"Unless thou wilt aid me with charm and with
spell,
To gain back the heart I have cherish'd so well,
And rid me of her who with art the most vile
Has poison'd my peace with her glozing and guile—
I hate her with hatred intense as despair!—
Yet murder's a guilt that my soul cannot bear."

VI.

"Be calm, craven spirit! On me be the guilt.
No poison shall rack her, no blood shall be spilt.

Till my hair has turn'd gray, and my blood has
grown thin,
I have dwelt on Ben More with the spirits of sin ;
And have learn'd by their aid without weapons to
kill,
And can blast by a look, and destroy by my will.

VII.

"Were the good ship, the Florida, far on the seas,
I'd whirl her and toss her, like chaff on the breeze,
And far on some cliff, where the storms ever roar,
And aid could not reach them, I'd drive them
ashore ;
And the wanton I'd seize by her long raven locks,
And drag her to death at the foot of the rocks.

VIII.

"But safe from all danger of winds and of tides,
In calm Tobermory at anchor she rides ;
But peril may come 'mid security deep,
And vengeance may wake when the world is asleep ;
And strong though her timbers—her haven secure,
The hand of Revenge, though unseen, shall be sure."

IX.

Serene was the night, and unruffled the bay,
Not a breath stirr'd the deep where the Florida lay ;
Her broad azure pennant hung breezeless on high,
And her thin taper masts pointed clear to the sky ;

And the moonlight that fell on the breast of the
deep
Appear'd like the charm that had lull'd it to sleep.

X.

The cabin-boy dream'd of the vineyards of Spain,
Or roam'd with a maiden at sunset again ;
The sailor, in fancy, was dancing afar, .
In his own native land, to the graceful guitar ;
Or bless'd with a household, in sleep, was restored
To the children he loved, and the wife he adored.

XI.

The fair Spanish lady in visions was blest :
She dream'd that, escaped from the isles of the West,
Her young Highland chief had consented to roam
To her far Andalusia in search of a home ;
That together they dwelt in her own sunny clime,
Where life was not effort, and love was not crime.

XII.

None dream'd of the danger that round them might
lurk ;
But in darkness and silence a spell was at work.
Conceal'd in the waters, at poop and at prow,
The agents of evil were busy below ;
And noiseless their labour, but certain their stroke,
Through her strong copper'd hull, and her timbers of
oak.

XIII.

And long ere the morning, a loud sudden shriek
Was heard o'er the bay "Sprung a leak!—sprung
a leak!"

Oh! then there was gathering in tumult and fear,
And a blanching of cheeks, as the peril grew near;
A screaming of women—a shouting of men,
And a rushing and trampling, again and again!

XIV.

No time for leave-taking—no leisure to weep!
In roll'd the fierce waters, and down to the deep,
Down, down fifty fathoms, with captain and crew,
The Florida sank, with the haven in view.—
Down, down to the bottom, escaping but one,
To tell the sad tale of the deed that was done.

XV.

And he, as he battled for life with the tide,
Beheld the fair lady of Spain by his side,
And a lank skinny hand, that came up through the
spray,
And twined in her tresses, as floating she lay,
And heard the loud laughter of fiends in the air,
As she sank 'mid the waves with a shriek of despair.

THE BRIDGE OF GLEN ARAY.

I.

WE pass'd the bridge with tramping steeds,
The waters rush'd below,
Down from the gorges of the hills
We heard the torrents flow.
But louder than the roar of streams—
We rode as hurried men,—
The foot-falls of our cavalcade
Re-echoed through the glen.

II.

WE sang and shouted as we went,
Our hearts were light that day,
When near the middle of the bridge
A shrill voice bade us stay.
We saw a woman gaunt and old
Come gliding up the rocks,
With long bare arms, and shrivell'd face,
And gray dishevell'd locks.

III.

SHE seized my bridle suddenly,
The horse stood still with fear—
Her hand was strong and bird-like long—
Her eye was piercing clear.

"Oh shame!" she said, "oh cruel shame!
To ride so fierce and wild,
The clatter of your horses' hoofs
Will wake my little child.

IV.

"Oh hush! oh hush! I pray you, hush!
I ask no other boon—
No word be said—and softly tread—
The child will waken soon.
I die of noises all day long,
From Morn till Even-blush,
Not for my sake, but hers, I pray—
Hush! if you're Christians, hush!"

V.

Much wonder'd we to hear her words,
But Hugh, our guide, look'd on;
"Poor soul!" he said, "we'll do our best
To earn her benison.
'Twill cost no trouble to be kind:
Good Chrystie, let us through,
We will not wake your sleeping child,
But pray for her and you."

VI.

She slowly let the bridle fall—
"Ride on your way," she said—
"But oh, be silent! noise like yours
Disturbs both quick and dead."

And then she slid among the rocks ;—
We saw not where she went,
But turn'd to Hugh our anxious eyes,
Inquiring what she meant.

VII.

“Poor thing !” he said, while forth we rode
As if we trod on snow,
“Her brain is turn'd by sore mischance
That happen'd long ago.
Her age was scarcely twenty then,
But what it now may be
Is somewhat difficult to fix,
Between fourscore and three.

VIII.

“Though now she's ugly as a witch,
She was a beauty then,
And with her gentleness and grace
She won the hearts of men.
And Donald Bain won hers, and sought
The hand she freely gave ;—
They married ; but before a year
She wept upon his grave.

IX.

“A little babe was left behind,—
A fairy thing, 'tis said,
With soft blue eyes and golden hair,
And cheeks of cherry red.

It grew in beauty every day,
The maid was two years old,
The darling of her mother's life
A pleasure to behold.

X.

"One day she wander'd to the stream—
It was the time of floods—
Perchance she chased the butterfly,
Or pluck'd the yellow buds.
She lost her footing on the brink ;—
The mother heard the cry,
And sprang to save,—but all too late !
The flood ran roaring by.

XI.

"She saw the little face and hands,
Then leap'd into the foam,
To snatch it from impending death,
And bear her darling home.
In vain ! in vain ! oh, all in vain !
The neighbours gather'd round,
They saved the mother from the deep—
The little child was drown'd.

XII.

"And since that day—past fifty years—
She's linger'd by the stream,
And thinks the babe has gone to sleep,
And dreams a happy dream.

She fancies it will soon awake,
With blue eyes twinkling, mild—
Unchanged by half a century,
And still a little child.

XIII.

“Beside the waters where it sank
She sits the livelong day,
Her eyes upon the eddies fix’d,
That round the boulders play ;
And spreads to dry upon the rocks
The clothes which it shall wear,
The little frock, the tiny shoes,
And ribbons for its hair.

XIV.

“She loves deep silence ;—bless’d with that,
She feeds on empty hope,
And daily nerves a broken heart
With misery to cope.
The pitying friends who bring her food
All speak in whispers low,
And never argue with the thought
That cheers her in her woe.

XV.

“For she is harmless as a babe,
Though mad, as you may see ;—
God save our senses, one and all !—”
“Amen ! amen !” said we.

Such was the tale, and all that day
Such sympathy it woke,
I turn'd to chide each rising noise,
And whisper'd as I spoke.

GLEN ARAY, INVERNESS-SHIRE,
1849.



THE PLANTING OF THE ACORNS.

DARNAWAY FOREST.

I.

UPON this bare unshelter'd ground
The living germs we strew,
And pray for kindly summer suns,
And fertilizing dew.
Receive the Acorns, mother Earth,
And feed them year by year,
Till proud and high, towards the sky
Their lordly boughs they rear.
Winds, blow gently o'er them!
Rain, fall softly down!
Earth, enwrap them warmly
In thy bosom brown!

II.

Beneath the shadow of their leaves
The wanton birds shall play,
And lovers in the summer eves
Shall sigh their hearts away;

Or sit together side by side
In solitary nooks,
To read in one another's eyes
The lore not learn'd in books.
Winds, blow gently o'er them!
Stars, look kindly through!
Fortune, smile upon them,
If their love be true!

III.

And here in rural holidays,
The village girls shall sing
The simple rhymes of olden times,
While dancing in a ring.
Old men, upon the sward beneath,
Shall loiter in the sun,
With pipe and glass, and drowsy talk
Of all the deeds they've done.
Winds, blow gently o'er them!
Sunshine, gild their way!
Time, lay light thy fingers
On their heads of gray!

IV.

And when a hundred years have pass'd,
The oaks, grown old and hoar,
Shall serve to form some mighty fleet,
To guard our native shore.

By trusty hearts, in peril's hour,
Our flag shall be unfurl'd
To sound the fame of Britain's name
In thunder o'er the world.
Winds, blow gaily o'er them !
Calm thy rage, O sea !
Bear thy burden proudly
On to Victory !



THE FALL OF FOYERS,

LOCH NESS, INVERNESS-SHIRE.

I.

WET with the spray of this transcendant river,
Upon this crag with mosses cover'd o'er,
I love to stand, and listen to the roar
Of waters bursting down the rocks for ever—
Dash'd into rainbows where the sunbeams quiver.—
The sound of billows as they beat the shore,
Or thunder leaping on the hill-tops hoar,
Till the firm earth beneath its footsteps shiver,
Is not more awful than thy flood, O Foyers !
Roaring 'mid chasms like an escaping sea.—
Alone, and silent, in thy presence vast,
Awed, yet elated, the rapt soul aspires,
Forgetting all its meaner longings past,
To hold high converse, intimate, with thee.

II.

Yes ! all unmindful of the world without,
My spirit with thee, and my eyes in thrall
To thy great beauty, swathing me about,
To me thy voice breathes peace, majestic Fall !

Envy and pride, and warring passions all—
Hatred and scorn, and littleness of mind,
And all the mean vexations of mankind,

Fade from my spirit at thy powerful call.
I stand before thee, reverent and dumb,

And hear thy voice discoursing to my soul

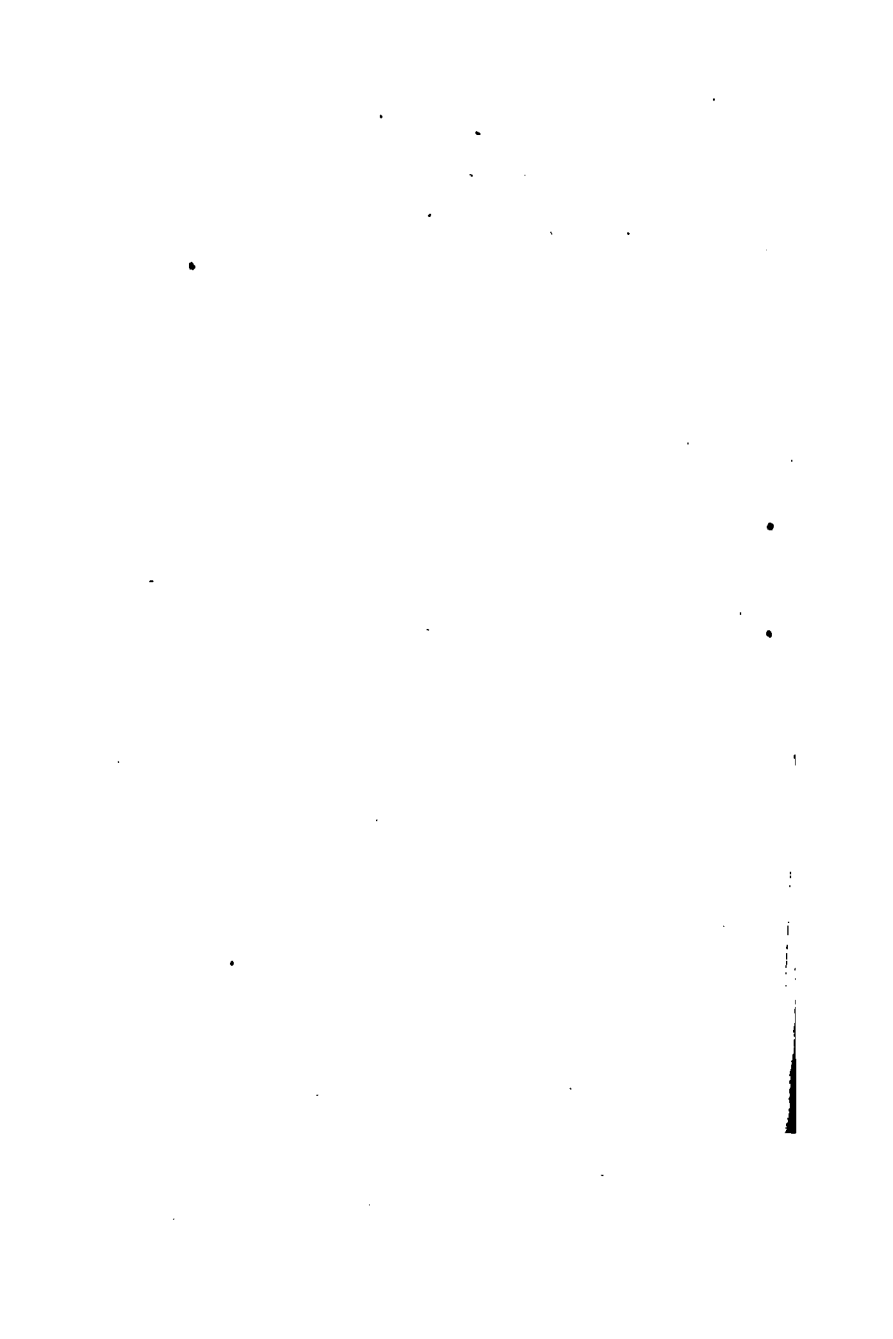
Sublime orations tuned to psalmody—
High thoughts of peril met and overcome—

Of Power and Beauty and Eternity,
And the great God who bade thy waters roll!



FOYERS BEFORE THE FALL.

ERE this commotion wakens in thy breast,
Or these stern rocks call forth thy hidden powers,
How gently, Foyers, thou passest all thine hours!
Now loitering where the linnet builds its nest,
Or in green meadows where the cattle rest
Lingering, and singing to the birken bowers,
And heather-bells and all the woodland flowers
That bare their bosoms to the fragrant west.
So the great minds that soar to heights sublime,
And win in peril all the world's applause
By thoughts of wisdom and courageous deeds,
Are aye the same that, in a calmer time,
Conform them to the sweet domestic laws,
And sport with happy children in the meads.





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